

REFI Doubles Teacher Supplies

Received Shipment From North Carolina

By NOLAN STOUT Daily News-Record



Rockingham Education Foundation Inc. Executive Director Katie LaPira sifts through a large donation from a North Carolina warehouse delivered to the foundation's school supply depot in Harrisonburg.



Large rolls of paper sit ready to be claimed for use by county educators at the Rockingham Educational Foundation Inc. school supply depot on Monday afternoon.



Assorted educational games and puzzles sorted from a large donation to the Rockingham Educational Foundation Inc. school supply depot sit ready to be picked up by county educators Monday afternoon.

HARRISONBURG — The Rockingham Educational Foundation Inc. has more than doubled its stock of supplies that are offered free to county teachers.

REFI, which provides grants for teachers and scholarships for students, received a 3-ton shipment of supplies last week from Brame Specialty of Durham, N.C.

The items, estimated to be worth more than \$500,000, will be distributed through REFI's teacher supply depot behind Rockingham County Public Schools' office on Mount Clinton Pike.

"It's just to help to offset the cost so the teachers don't have to pay for their supplies from their own budget," said REFI Executive Director Katie LaPira. "We're really lucky in Rockingham County to be able to have this for the teachers."

The depot started at John C. Myers Elementary School in 2001 and moved into its current location in 2007. It's open weekly to county teachers and receives about \$250,000 worth of new and used materials from businesses and community members annually.

The donation started with a "missed opportunity," LaPira said.

The organization didn't get many supplies from an auction after Harrisonburg's Howard A. Spangler Co., a wholesale supply company, closed at the end of 2017. After the company closed, a REFI board member reached out to companies across the region asking for donations.

At the time, Brame Specialty was transitioning to furniture supplies and cleaning out old inventory, LaPira said. The company held auctions and opened its doors to area teachers, but supplies weren't moving fast enough. Brame planned to dump the supplies at the landfill when the company received REFI's email.

Last week, Harrisonburg-based Interchange Group volunteered a truck and driver to pick up the supplies.

Some of the supplies are dated, such as VHS and cassette tapes, two-hole punchers and an overhead projector. Other items include hundreds of pens, folders, packages of paper and several trifold poster boards.

Volunteers plan to dig into the many pallets of material next week when schools are on spring break.

"We have some of the stuff out, but we haven't even begun to go through all of the boxes that are back here," LaPira said. "It's like Christmas. You don't even know what you're going to get."

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